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ABSTRACT

Ways to improve the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at Dowling College were identified through a survey of the Long Island business community. The survey assessed employers' perceptions of the need for specialization in the graduate business program, the importance of the college's MBA courses to students' careers, employers' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses in MBA education, and employers' needs and attitudes regarding graduate business education in general. A survey was sent to presidents of 50 leading Long Island firms, and 37 presidents or executives responded. Recommendations include: develop specializations in accounting, computer information systems, finance, and marketing; develop courses in business communications, ethics, human resource management, labor relations, decision-making and problem-solving, finance, and computer information systems; implement the greater use of case studies, projects, and/or papers in courses to improve communication and analytical skills; use more business executives as guest lecturers and/or adjunct professors; expand and promote internships programs; and offer courses off-campus at various firm locations. The questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND ATTITUDES OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON LONG ISLAND: IMPLICATIONS FOR M.B.A. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

SOCIETAL FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND ATTITUDES OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON LONG ISLAND: IMPLICATIONS FOR M.B.A. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

SOCIETAL FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION

James F. Newman, MBA
Dowling College

Society is a system, comprised of social systems, joined together in regular interaction, operating to perform fundamental functions vital to the whole. Business is part of the social system. Business has changed dramatically due to technological advances but in many cases, education has not. It was important, therefore, to find out if graduate education, particularly at Dowling College, had kept pace with these innovative changes. Many faculty members questioned the effectiveness of the graduate business program at Dowling and that was what made this study an appropriate one for the seminar, Societal Factors Affecting Education, offered by Nova University.

The business community is an important constituency of graduate business education and the needs of this constituency must be satisfied. The purpose, therefore, of this practicum was to determine the mutual needs of the business community on Long Island and Dowling

College by assessing employers' perceptions of the need for specialization in the program, the importance of the Dowling MBA courses to students' and alumni's careers, employers' perceptions of the strengths and/or deficiencies in MBA education and employers' needs and attitudes regarding graduate business education in general.

A survey was sent to the presidents of fifty leading Long Island firms. Each president was requested to complete the survey personally or pass it on to a delegated representative. Thirty-seven executives responded and were most forthright in their responses. These data provided the necessary information to make certain recommendations for improvement of the Dowling College MBA program.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Develop specializations in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Finance and Marketing.

2. Develop courses in:

    a. Business Communications;

    b. Ethics;

    c. Human Resouce Management;

    d. Labor Relations;

    e. Decision Making - Problem Solving - Critical Thinking;

    f. Finance; and

    g. Computer Information Systems.

3. Eliminate the following courses:

   a. Small Business Management;

   b. Manufacturing;

   c. Business Law;

   d. Government & Business; and

   e. Operations Research.

4. Implement the greater use of case studies, projects and/or papers in courses to improve communications skills and analytical skills.

5. Examine the feasibility of using more business executives as guest lecturers and/or adjunct professors.

6. Examine the feasibility of expanding and promoting the internship program.

7. Examine the feasibility of offering courses off-campus at various firm locations.

8. A further study of the MBA program should be undertaken in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Human behavior operates in a social milieu, working through institutions comprised of individuals who are for the most part collected in groups. Society is a system, comprised of social systems, joined in regular interaction, operating to perform fundamental functions vital to the whole. The social structure represents the patterns of behavior that are established as individuals and groups relate to one another (Resource Book, 1984: 1-4). When social change, which is inevitable, takes place, old values, traditions and meanings are transformed into new conduct involving profound changes in characteristic behavior patterns (Resource Book, 1984:16).

Purpose

Business is part of the social system. Business has changed dramatically due to technological advances but in many cases, education has not. It was important, therefore, to find out if graduate education, particularly at Dowling, had kept pace with these innovative advances. Many faculty members questioned the effectiveness of the graduate business education program at Dowling and that was what made this study an appropriate one for the seminar, Societal Factors Affecting Education, offered by Nova University. The business community is an important constituency of graduate business education and the needs

of this constituency must be satisfied. The purpose, therefore, of this practicum was to determine the mutual needs of the business community on Long Island and Dowling College by assessing employers' perceptions of the need for specialization in the program, the importance of the Dowling College MBA courses to students' and alumni's careers, employers' perceptions of the strengths and/or deficiencies in MBA education and employers' needs and attitudes regarding graduate education in general.

Background and Significance

In the 1950s, a handful of schools offered the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program; now hundreds do (Herold, 1985:3). Dowling College is one of those hundreds. In fact, Dowling College is the only Suffolk County, Long Island based college to offer a Master of Business Administration degree program (De Maria, 1985:32). Business schools have a crucial role to play in adequately preparing business leaders to meet the challenges of the future; Dowling College has a crucial role on Long Island in this respect. Since the program's inception in 1976, Long Islanders in the MBA program at Dowling have been helped in their preparation for successful business careers. The faculty and administration, considering Dowling's unique position of being the only Suffolk County based college offering an MBA, have a responsibility to continue to supply

well-trained and well-educated candidates for the managerial positions that will be evolving in the future on Long Island.

The MBA has become a major force in business education, a revenue source for universities and a university-business connection that promotes corporate financial and human resource contributions (Van Doren et al., 1986:34). The MBA program is an important one at Dowling College and it is in the best interest of all concerned to strive for excellence so as to keep the program current, competitive and well-regarded (Maiorana, 1982:1). The problem, as perceived by the faculty at Dowling, was that the MBA program had not been adequately maintained and/or improved over the years. The program had never been evaluated to determine its effectiveness on the population it serves. The program needed to be evaluated if Dowling is to maintain its unique position and take advantage of future opportunities. To do so, the program had to be examined and changes recommended as perceived necessary to face the challenges of the next decade and to fulfill Dowling's role of providing well-educated employees, leaders and managers to the business community so strong business ties can be developed.

The Dowling College faculty and Administration must find a niche for the MBA program for the next decade so it may survive in a changing environment. The market

to be served therefore had to be assessed. The dynamic nature of the business world requires educators to be aware of that constantly changing nature. From the results of this study, a niche for Dowling's MBA program may be found so the program may survive in this changing environment. The Dowling faculty must be a pro-active force in graduate education on Long Island and play their part in the future development of the growing business community on Long Island.

Review of Related Literature

Townsend (1985:1) has written:

> Long Island can point with pride to its ranking as the country's first market in disposable income per household and ninth in population and in total retail sales among the 315 metro markets in the United States. With its 2.6 million population, where unemployment remains constantly below the national average, Long Island is a natural attraction for companies seeking relocation to areas of superior industrial and marketing potential.

Economic trends are dictating the geographic distribution of job opportunities (Stodden, 1985:4). To be enticed to Long Island, however, a firm must know that there is a pool of well-educated employees and future leaders who can understand and interpret the complex relationships of the business world and can reconsider the old ideas and operating practices in light of the complexities of modern society. To provide this future pool, educators must examine their respective programs and institute necessary

changes in procedures, curricula and/or administration. There is a need to develop new concepts concerning education and training for adults (Resource Book, 1984: 42). Educators, including those at Dowling, must develop a working relationship with this very important constituency, the business community. A high level, long-term commitment is essential.

American business executives regard the Masters degree in Business Administration with respect and with the view that MBA holders will play a major role in tomorrow's business world (Staff Reporter, 1987:3). During the 1970s, the MBA degree became a prerequisite for many promising corporate positions (Jenkins et al., 1984: 20). For a 1980's career-climber, the three most important letters in the alphabet are MBA (Byrne, 1986: 104). The MBA has become the price of entry and the passport to higher level positions in business. Graduate business (MBA) education in America has achieved its promised maturity and is now widely accepted as a way to improve substantially the probabilities of future managerial success; in fact some doors to career opportunity can be opened only with the MBA key (Hennessey, 1984:23). For some, the MBA is the preferred degree of the Yuppie generation (Herold, 1985:3).

MBA programs have proliferated. The number of Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees awarded has increased dramatically over the years despite tighter

entrance criteria in many colleges and universities. There has been a significant increase in the number of women and minorities receiving the MBA (Hennessey, 1984: 24). Along with the dramatic increase in the number of women degree holders, statistics show a shift from full-time to part-time enrollment (Kurst, 1982:9).

In 1983 some 600 schools with graduate business programs turned out 63,000 graduates, compared with 21,000 in 1970 (Jenkins et al., 1984:20). In 1985 nearly 65,000 business school graduates added the letters MBA to their resumes. Thirty-five years ago, an MBA was rare - held by a mere few thousand Americans. Today, nearly a million hold the degree. Yet some predicted that the growth rate would begin to level off as increasing competition and the changing economy affected the MBA supply/demand ratio (Kurst, 1982:9).

Meskill, President of Dowling College, stated that

> In the course of time, the value of the college experience is proven many times . . . ., proven in the contributions made to help this nation meet the challenges of tomorrow, proven in the attainment of professional, intellectual, and personal career goals . . . . (De Maria, 1985:32).

Limited educational attainment restricts a nation's capacity to expand its productive capacity and for the individual, limited education becomes a barrier to securing employment (Resource Book, 1984:39). Society can overcome these limitations through improved and timely education. Formal educational institutions have become

the selecting and certifying agencies for labor force distribution. The result is that the diploma or degree has become the price of entry to an increasing number of jobs (Resource Book, 1984:39-40). It is this need for timely education that made studies like this so important as was pointed out in the Nova University seminar, Societal Factors Affecting Education.

Is the degree worth what it once was and worth the time and money expended by the student or the employer? Some say yes, others aren't so sure (Herold, 1985:3). Many corporate managers have become more discriminating in appraising MBA holders - and the MBA degree. Serious questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the country's graduate business schools. Corporate leaders have begun to criticize the curricula and approaches used at many graduate schools. An innovative, state of the art curriculum is being called for. Business educators have also begun to question whether schools are producing candidates prepared for the complexity, rigor and down-to-earth problems of the corporate world (Jenkins et al., 1984:20). Such was and is the case at Dowling College. Some feel that MBA programs stress a short-term financial outlook which perpetuates business problems rather than solves them. Students tend to gain skills in managing things and not people (Maiorana, 1982:1).

The need for an even closer relationship between the business and academic communities was and is evident.

Many of the goals and techniques as well as the problems of educators have reality in business (Moore and Canfield, 1977:322). Since the business community employs the majority of college graduates and draws its leadership from these graduates, the relationship of the college campus to business is a significant fact in business viability. The close and relevant interface of business and higher education is a new development and a necessary one (Davis and Blomstrom, 1975:390).

Adult education plays an important role today in providing information people need in order to cope with changing social conditions (Resource Book, 1984:24). Business, education, youth, and other groups in society have key, cooperative roles to play in improving the quality of life in a knowledge society, but for these groups to achieve their potential, they need to emphasize mutual goals and responsibilities instead of differences and rights (Davis and Blomstrom, 1975:394). A knowledge society exists when more than half the labor force is employed in knowledge-based occupations rather than in manual operations. Knowledge-based occupations are most of the professional, managerial and technical occupations as defined by the census (Drucker, 1969:263-264). The business community in a knowledge society needs well-educated employees, managers and leaders. MBA programs, such as the one at Dowling College, provide these well-educated employees, managers and leaders. But

for Dowling College academics to do so requires knowing the needs and attitudes of Long Island business executives regarding such programs and the curricula therein.

Responding to growing criticism from the business community, academics across the country are examining and changing the graduate business curricula. Thomas Piper, Senior Associate Dean at Harvard Business School stated, "What I'm hearing is a need to review the product (graduate education), to improve the product and to change the product" (Swartz, 1985:1). College and university academics must understand what kind of "product" they are producing and what kind of "product" is needed by the business community (Wooten, 1984:26). The graduate business school curriculum must be appropriate for the various constituencies that are to be served. College and university academics nationwide are challenged to provide more complex, dynamic, and innovative curricula. The goal of this study was to determine, if possible, what the curriculum for the Dowling College MBA program should be based upon the perceptions of business executives.

This is an age when graduate schools of business are being scrutinized for their effectiveness. Business as usual doesn't work any more. College academics must guard constantly against education becoming a static system. Academics must respond to change (Levitt, 1985: 11). Some business school educators are considering change as a matter of survival; after explosive growth in

the 1970s, the number of MBA applicants is shrinking.

Pascarella (1986:72) proposed that

> The process of change depends on a leader's ability to create a vision, the enthusiasm with which he or she communicates it, and the commitment that vision can uncover in the followers. It calls for leadership that searches deep within itself for purpose and listens carefully so that it can create ways for others to link their personal purposes to it. The process is directed by a picture of what the organization can be - something so compelling that people challenge their assumptions and perceptions and place results far above routine.

The purpose of initiating educational change, particularly at the graduate business level, is to better serve the needs of a very important constituency, the business community which today is beset with vast technological changes and advances. Varcoe (1984:15) wrote that

> The future will be influenced greatly by the technological advances we are beginning to see today. Education cannot avoid the increasing impact of technology both in terms of the educational process and the product.

Many educators contend that the most important step business school educators can take to remain competitive is to find a market niche compatible with their resources. Innovation may determine which business schools survive the next decade (Swartz, 1985:35). Some will survive by concentrating on the needs of local businesses. That is what the academics at Dowling College must do. It was with this in mind that this study was undertaken. The central theme was the presentation and analysis of data relating to the need for specialization

in the program, the importance of the Dowling College MBA courses to students' and alumni's careers, and the perceived strengths and/or deficiencies in graduate business education, and employers' needs and attitudes regarding graduate business education. The analysis of the data received was necessary before any recommendations for improvement in the program could be made and any results expected. The objective of this study was to discover hidden needs that could be satisfied by Dowling College's MBA program so as to enhance the program's quality and effectiveness.

PROCEDURES

A survey (Appendix A) was developed and sent to local business executives in order to determine needs and attitudes regarding MBA programs and MBA holders. Since the intent was to determine needs and attitudes, no hypotheses were tested. The major goal was to determine the need for specialization in the program, the importance of courses to students' and alumni's careers, the perceived strengths and/or deficiencies in MBA education and employers' needs and attitudes regarding graduate business education, therefore, no elaborate statistical techniques were employed to determine significant differences or similarities. After examining the results and the recommendations made, the Administration and the faculty will be able to plan for the future.

Population

The survey instrument along with a data collection form (optical scan type) (Appendix B) was sent to the presidents of fifty leading firms on Long Island as listed in the Long Island Almanac (Townsend, 1985). The presidents were requested to complete the survey themselves or pass it on to their delegated representatives.

Instrument

To determine the needs and attitudes of business community executives on Long Island, a survey instrument was developed. To test this instrument for content validity, a preliminary survey instrument was developed and presented to three faculty members in the Business Administration Division at Dowling College for their input concerning format, material, ambiguity, and clarity. Prior to testing the survey in the business community, the Vice President for Academic Affairs also edited the instrument, made suggestions and approved it. The Vice President's and faculty's suggestions were incorporated into the survey and then the improved survey was presented to three business executives as a pilot project to further test for form, ambiguity, clarity and impact. Based upon the input of these executives, the survey was further modified.

Implementation

Implementation of this survey followed basic survey procedures which entail sending out the survey, receiving responses, possible follow-up with non-respondents, and analyzing results in order to make recommendations. The survey was mailed to the presidents along with a stamped self-addressed return envelope. A two week response time was allowed. A fifty percent response rate was to be considered satisfactory. If the fifty percent response rate had not been attained, a follow-up survey form would have been sent to the non-respondents. An additional two week response period was to be allotted. If the fifty percent response rate still had not been reached, a phone call was to be made with the intent to interview the non-respondents until the desired response rate was attained. The implementation of recommended changes will be the result of discussions and the examination of available resources.

Treatment of the Data

When the survey cover sheets and data collection forms were returned, the responses were analyzed and tabulated where appropriate. The responses were listed in tables in numerical and percentage format. No other type of statistical analysis was utilized. These data were examined to determine common themes to ascertain any

Long Island business community needs not being met by graduate schools in general and Dowling in particular.

Assumptions

It was assumed that each president would see the need for such a survey and would either respond or have a representative respond. Another assumption was that the perceptions of the respondents would be diverse enough so that a broad spectrum of ideas would emerge. That the results of the survey sections dealing with specialization and the importance of courses to careers would be clear enough to make recommendations was a major assumption. Also, it was assumed that these recommendations would be accepted and acted upon and that the ensuing actions would strengthen the program.

Limitations

The results of the distributed survey may not have brought out all the needs and/or attitudes of business executives regarding MBA programs. Those executives with strong feelings about graduate business education may not have responded. The results of this survey may not be able to be generalized to other populations or programs.

RESULTS

Four firms had been relocated leaving forty-six executives who received the survey. Of these forty-six,

thirty-seven (80.4%) responded. These executives held such titles as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Senior Vice President, Vice President (2), Assistant Vice President, Director of Administration (2), Director of Strategic Planning, Director of Industrial Relations, Controller, Human Resource Manager (or similar title) (23) and Sales Manager. Represented in these thirty-seven firms were defense (Eaton, Unisys, ITT Avionics, and Vicon), aerospace (Hartman, Arkwin, Monitor Aerospace, and Satellite Transmission Systems), high tech electronic (IBM, Xerox, Cardion, M/A-Com, Miltope, and Narda Microwave), electrical equipment manufacturing (Deutsch Relay), mail service (Jetson), transportation (Metco), record manufacturing (Hauppauge Tape), and pharmaceutical (Dupont) firms. Others that were represented were a national bakery (Entenmann's), a prominent department store (Fortunoff's), several local and national banking firms (Citibank, Chemical, Chase Manhattan, Union Savings and the Bank of Long Island), several national insurance firms (Travelers, Cigna, Geico and Alexander and Alexander), a national testing lab (Underwriters), the Brookhaven National Laboratory, a major Long Island newspaper (Newsday), the Long Island Lighting Company, a national beauty aids manufacturing firm (Estee Lauder), and the Roman Catholic Diocese. These firms represented a cross section of Long Island industry. The responses provided an excellent perspecitve

of the needs and attitudes of various business executives and employers of Master of Business Administration degree holders.

Upon receiving the survey instruments from the various respondents, the open-ended questions were checked and the responses listed. The data collection forms used for the multiple choice questions were read by a computer scanner; the data that was collected and the percentages that were calculated were then listed in Tables 1 and 2. No elaborate statistical techniques were employed to determine significant differences or similarities since only one group, Long Island business executives, was surveyed.

Need for Specialization

The respondents were requested to answer the following question: "In addition to Management, should Dowling offer a major or concentration in the MBA program in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Finance, Marketing and/or Aeronautics?" Twenty-nine (78.4%) respondents responded Yes as to Accounting and Computer Information Systems. Thirty-two (86.5%) responded Yes as to Finance while twenty-five (67.6%) responded Yes as to Marketing. Only four (10.8%) responded Yes as to Aeronautics. Twenty-two (59.4%), however, had no opinion or did not respond as to Aeronautics. These data are exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1

Recommendations for New Majors

	Number and Percentages of Responses			
N = 37				
Major	Yes	No	No Opinion/No Response	Total
Accounting				
Responses	29	4	4	37
Percentage	78.4	10.8	10.8	100
Computer Information Systems				
Responses	29	3	5	37
Percentage	78.4	8.1	13.5	100
Finance				
Responses	32	0	5	37
Percentage	86.5	0.0	13.5	100
Marketing				
Responses	25	4	8	37
Percentage	67.6	10.8	21.6	100
Aeronautics				
Responses	4	11	22	37
Percentage	10.8	29.7	59.4	100

Concentrations Most Important to Careers

The business executives were requested to rank the area or concentration considered to be most important to a Master of Business Administration degree holder's career. Finance was ranked highest; it was rated important by

thirty-one executives. Next in ranking was Computer Information Systems with thirty responses. The executives ranked Accounting and Management equally important with twenty-nine responses. Next in ranking was Marketing with twenty-eight responses. Other areas mentioned and the number of times mentioned were Manufacturing Operations (2), Human Resources (2), Human Relations, Communications Skills, Purchasing, Project Management and Sales (once each).

Importance of Courses to Careers

The business executives were requested to list courses which they considered helpful in the training of graduate business students. The courses and the number of times recommended were: The Role and Function of a Manager (5), Banking (3), Business Communication (3), Decision Making/Problem Solving (3), Insurance (2), Business Ethics (2), Leadership (2), Controllership (1), and Time Management (1).

In order to determine if the MBA curriculum is appropriate for the business community, the respondents were requested to indicate how important the MBA courses are to students' and alumni's careers. The respondents were asked to indicate Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, Unimportant or No Opinion. The No Opinion responses were added to the no response category when exhibited in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceptions of the Level of Importance of Courses to the Careers of Students and Alumni

Number and Percentages of Responses

N = 37

Key VI = Very Important
SI = Somewhat Important
NVI = Not Very Important
U = Unimportant
NO/NR = No Opinion/No Response

Course	VI	SI	NVI	U	NO/NR	TOTAL
Management & Organization Theory						
Responses	9	16	9	1	2	37
Percentage	24.3	43.2	24.3	2.7	5.4	100
Personnel & Industrial Psychology						
Responses	10	17	8	0	2	37
Percentage	27.0	45.9	21.6	0.0	5.4	100
Management Theory						
Responses	10	18	6	1	2	37
Percentage	27.0	48.6	16.2	2.7	5.4	100
Organizational Behavior						
Responses	12	13	8	2	2	37
Percentage	32.4	35.2	21.6	5.4	5.4	100
Small Business Management						
Responses	3	10	6	16	2	37
Percentage	8.1	27.0	16.2	43.2	5.4	100
Manufacturing						
Responses	12	5	4	14	2	37
Percentage	32.4	13.5	10.8	37.8	5.4	100

Table 2 (Continued)

Perceptions of the Level of Importance of Courses to the Careers of Students and Alumni

	Number and Percentages of Responses					
N = 37						
Key VI = Very Important SI = Somewhat Important NVI = Not Very Important U = Unimportant NO/NR = No Opinion/No Response						
Course	VI	SI	NVI	U	NO/NR	TOTAL
Interpersonal Dynamics						
Responses	9	20	3	3	2	37
Percentage	24.3	54.1	8.1	8.1	5.4	100
Business Law						
Responses	5	12	15	2	3	37
Percentage	13.5	32.4	40.5	5.4	8.1	100
Financial Statement Analysis						
Responses	13	13	5	4	2	37
Percentage	35.2	35.2	13.5	10.8	5.4	100
Marketing Research						
Responses	8	13	12	2	2	37
Percentage	21.6	35.2	32.4	5.4	5.4	100
Financial Management						
Responses	20	15	0	0	2	37
Percentage	54.1	40.5	0.0	0.0	5.4	100
Business Forecasting						
Responses	15	17	2	1	2	37
Percentage	40.5	45.9	5.4	2.7	5.4	100

Table 2 (Continued)

Perceptions of the Level of Importance of Courses to the Careers of Students and Alumni

	Number and Percentages of Responses					
N = 37						
Key VI = Very Important SI = Somewhat Important NVI = Not Very Important U = Unimportant NO/NR = No Opinion/No Response						
Course	VI	SI	NVI	U	NO/NR	TOTAL
Government & Business						
Responses	6	14	12	3	2	37
Percentage	16.2	37.8	32.4	8.1	5.4	100
Operations Research						
Responses	5	14	12	3	3	37
Percentage	13.5	37.8	32.4	8.1	8.1	100
Managerial Economics						
Responses	5	17	11	2	2	37
Percentage	13.5	45.9	29.7	5.4	5.4	100
Managerial Accounting						
Responses	12	16	7	0	2	37
Percentage	32.4	43.2	18.9	0.0	5.4	100
Marketing Management						
Responses	13	16	3	3	2	37
Percentage	35.2	43.2	8.1	8.1	5.4	100
Computer Information Systems						
Responses	17	14	1	2	3	37
Percentage	45.9	37.8	2.7	5.4	8.1	100

Financial Management was perceived by thirty-five (94.6%) respondents to be Very or Somewhat Important. Thirty-one (93.7%) perceived Computer Information Systems to be Very or Somewhat Important. The next highest ranked course was Business Forecasting which was perceived to be Very or Somewhat Important by thirty-two (86.4%). Marketing Management and Interpersonal Dynamics were ranked next by twenty-nine (78.4%) respondents followed by Managerial Accounting and Management Theory (28 or 75.6%). The next two in ranking were Personnel & Industrial Psychology (27 or 72.9%) and Financial Statement Analysis (26 or 70.4%). Following in order of perceived importance were Organizational Behavior and Management & Organization Theory (both 25 or 67.6%), Managerial Economics (22 or 59.4%), Marketing Research (21 or 56.8%), Government & Business (20 or 54.0%), Operations Research (19 or 51.3%), Business Law and Manufacturing (both 17 or 45.9%) and Small Business Management (13 or 35.1%).

Recommendations for Courses

Many courses were recommended to be added to the Dowling College Master of Business Administration curriculum by the Long Island executives who responded to this survey. Following are these courses along with the number of times each was recommended: Management Practices (8), Business Communication (7), Business Ethics (4), Personnel Management (3), Job Evaluation and

Operations Techniques (twice each), Human Resource Planning, Administrative Management, Computer related courses, Community/Government Relations, Insurance, Labor Relations, International Finance, International Business, Problem Solving, Business Statistics and Capital Markets (once each).

Perceived Strengths and Deficiencies in Graduate Business Education

Strengths in Graduate Business Education

Many executives felt that graduate business education in general serves a good purpose in training employees, future managers and leaders. Following is a list of strengths in graduate business education as perceived by the business executives who responded to this survey:

1. Gives a more "holistic" frame of reference.
2. Offers candidates an opportunity to prepare themselves in a variety of areas for administrative positions. For those already in management, advanced study improves administrative skills.
3. Broadens the individuals' understanding of how business and markets function.
4. Exposes the individual to many functional areas.
5. Gives an overview of functional areas of business.

6. Offers a broad based business education.

7. Provides a "good rounding" in business.

8. Gives a broader perspective on business issues.

9. Overall content of business is better understood. Greater depth offered in particular functions.

10. Allows specialization in a certain area of business.

11. Individuals are better prepared for the management role after receiving in-depth business training.

12. Provides enhanced skills which are not derived from the undergraduate degree. Sharpens functional skills.

13. Instills an overall business way of thinking.

14. The MBA is valuable in expanding knowledge.

15. Provides the framework to understand the principles and contents of business. Helps one judge what the future might bring based on historical practices.

16. Provides opportunity to develop contacts with other business people to exchange ideas, problems, etc.

17. Turns out strong, self-assured candidates with technical competence.

18. Teaches business-oriented thought processes, communication and decision-making.

19. Improves analytical and communication skills.

20. Improves conceptual skills to apply to problem identification and problem solving.

21. Exposure to practical methods of problem resolution.

22. Improves the analytical ability of participants. Exposes them to all functional areas of business.

23. Opens the student's mind to a broad range of concepts beyond the narrow scope of a "job" into the interrelationships of the organization.

24. Develops an understanding of the relationships of a firm's various departments and their respective functions and goals.

25. Provides an appreciation of the importance of planning.

26. Provides a good education in management and general business theory.

27. Graduate business education is theoretical and statistical.

28. Exposes students to theory in operating a business enterprise.

29. Exposure to current theory and trends.

30. Integrates practical with theoretical issues. The use of the computer and data base management is very helpful.

31. Incorporates on-the-job training, the real world of business and text book learning.

32. Education is more theoretical and more applicable to business situations.

33. Emphasis on Accounting and Finance. Financial and Accounting programs are strong.

34. Use of case studies.

35. Provides disciplined business logic.

36. Organizations exist within fluid conditions - technological, economic, social and political - in their internal and external environments. Graduate business education provides students with the opportunity to develop their skills and ability to recognize these constantly changing conditions, to design methods of addressing them, and to implement plans of action for the benefit of the organization and society. A curriculum which includes business experience and case studies of recent business situations is extremely beneficial in providing students with a balanced foundation for their own business related decision-making.

Deficiencies in Graduate Business Education

Following is a list of deficiencies in graduate business education as perceived by the business executives who responded to this survey:

1. Not usually tailored to individual desires as far as a concentration or emphasis.

2. Not enough emphasis on Finance and computer related courses.

3. Lack of flexibility to pursue concentrations in programs.

4. Lack of concentration in the area of "doing business with the U.S. Government."

5. Curriculum is sometimes not "balanced" in terms of theory and practical operations.

6. Academic rather than practical. Big company oriented - very few will ever manage General Motors.

7. Statistical and theoretical - too much emphasis. Relies too heavily on statistical analysis.

8. Extremely task oriented. Short on thinking.

9. Lack of strong behavioral science and technical backgrounds.

10. Not enough attention is paid to developing or improving communication skills.

11. Writing skills.

12. Weak in business management. Not enough emphasis on the people side of managing a business.

13. Typically, professors are weak in integrating principles, theory, etc. with real life business examples.

14. Lack of real life applications.

15. No real life experience - too text book literate. Need more automation/computer literacy and business world applications.

16. Deficiencies in a graduate business education program are usually related to the structure of the particular program. The required "core" curriculum may

emphasize the monetary and mathematical related aspects of a business at the expense of offering students a solid background in the interpersonal relationships inherent in a business organization and the societal impacts involved in corporate policies and decisions. Also, the course orientation may be towards "classroom" theory without sufficient opportunity to apply the theory learned to case studies from recent business history.

17. Students often unable to practice theory in "real" world.

18. Realities of the business world are often ignored.

19. Programs are not flexible enough as far as hours of classes, etc.

20. Programs do not require enough effort from the students (especially in part-time programs).

21. Some programs tend to develop unrealistic expectations in students in regard to job promotions and increased job responsibility once the degree is obtained.

22. MBAs' evaluations of their own worth are inflated.

23. Seems to create unrealistic expectations regarding when the broad perspective developed should versus will match actual responsibilities of the job.

24. Expectations too high.

25. Tier I Schools (Ivy League) students appear to expect too much to come to them in terms of promotions

and are not willing to "pay their dues." Tier II school students are much more willing to work hard for their opportunities.

26. Need to have coop internships.

27. Tendency to mass produce MBAs.

28. If the MBA comes before work-related experience, the value of the MBA is less desirable.

29. Students need experiential training or "education" through organizational simulations, role playing, strategic/tactical planning and people managing.

Needs and Attitudes Regarding Graduate Business Education

The business executive respondents made additional comments and recommendations which reflect their needs and attitudes regarding business education. The comments and recommendations were as follow:

1. Experiences in a working environment are most enlightening when educational theory is combined with the practicality of everyday working operations.

2. Students should actively seek employment prior to entering a Masters degree program so as to equate learning to their chosen field.

3. It is extremely important to offer an MBA in disciplines other than Management.

4. All courses should be more oriented toward real case histories.

5. Internships during the MBA program are the key to the success of the MBA student. This should be a requirement for the degree.

6. The college should balance its MBA course offerings in required courses and electives between financial/quantitative subjects and the human resource aspects of management. It is important to have a solid background in both areas. The most effective manager is the person who knows how to work cooperatively with people and to motivate staff members to perform their responsibilities for the mutual benefit of the employee, the department, and the organization. A manager well-trained in accounting principles and economic theory will have difficulty achieving financial or production objectives if unable to communicate with, or display an appreciation for, the employees who must contribute to the achievement of those objectives.

7. Management programs should offer stronger management information systems requirements.

Firms' MBA Requirements

Only nine executives responded that their firms had policies which require employees in certain positions to obtain an Master of Business Administration degree and of these only two firms had policies which require that the degree be obtained prior to hiring. Thirty-four (92%) firms have a tuition reimbursement policy.

Twenty-three (62%) executives who have hired MBAs in the past responded that the MBA'S education had been adequate based upon the demands of the positions in their firms. Four (11%) disagreed.

Miscellaneous Responses

Three (8%) of the respondents answered that their firms' executives would agree to having courses taught at the firms' locations during working hours. Twelve (32%) agreed to having courses taught after working hours.

Twelve (32%) executives answered in the affirmative when asked if they would consider enrolling employees and/or executives at Dowling to take particular courses and sixteen (43%) responded that they would consider enrolling employees in an executive MBA program at Dowling. Twenty-nine (78%) executives responded that their firms' officers would consider having executives guest lecture or teach as adjuncts in the Dowling MBA program. Interns from the Dowling MBA program would be accepted in eight firms according to the respondents.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

In order to understand and determine where a program is, internal and external environmental scanning must be done. External scanning looks at the

opportunities for and threats to a program. Different viewpoints exist based upon who is doing the viewing (Newman, 1985:20). In this practicum, the viewpoint was that of certain Long Island business executives. It was important to determine if the MBA program was satisfying the needs of the business community, therefore, a survey of a sample of executives to ascertain their perceptions of the need for specialization in MBA programs, the importance of Dowling's MBA courses to the careers of students and alumni, the strengths and/or deficiencies of graduate business education and the needs and attitudes regarding graduate business education.

Thirty-seven Long Island business executives responded to the survey. The perceptions of these respondents were used in this practicum to make certain recommendations which should help to ensure the long range survival of Dowling's MBA program and Dowling College itself. The results obtained and the recomendations which were made were distributed to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Dean of the MBA program, the Business Division Coordinator, the five discipline Coordinators, and the Business Administration Division faculty. The results will become the base upon which to build and upon which to do future studies of the program. To satisfy the needs of the business community on Long Island is a major goal of this program and of the Administration and business faculty of Dowling College.

Implications

It is the duty of all college and univesity graduate business academics to maintain the Master of Business Administration degree program not only for their own college's or university's sake but for the sake of education in general. If Dowling College's MBA program is not maintained, it may not survive. This could have serious financial repercussions.

> Dowling College is most fortunate in that it has a dedicated, concerned full-time Business faculty. Dowling College is ideally located to serve Suffolk County, the Eastern portion of Long Island. The MBA program is financially beneficial to the College and therefore must survive. Survival will depend to a large degree on competition, present and future, and how this competition is met. (Newman, 1985:21).

This program, the only Suffolk County based MBA program, must be strengthened and improved based upon the recommendations made in this study. Failure to implement change in the program could result in failure of the program to survive. This study was done in order to lay the foundation for change in the program so it may meet the needs of the business community and so that the program may continue to be successful.

A major question in the survey was whether Dowling College should offer a major or concentration in the MBA program in Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Finance, Marketing and/or Aeronautics. The lack of specialization in the program is a serious situation as it

puts the Dowling MBA degree program at a disadvantage when compared with competitive MBA programs, particularly on Long Island. Specializations would greatly enhance the program, make it more competitive with other programs, and increase enrollment (Newman, 1985:23). If an MBA in Finance, Accounting, Marketing and/or Computer Information Systems was offered, Dowling academics would be meeting a need, as perceived by the business executive respondents. Having specializations in the program would make Dowling more competitive and satisfy the needs of the business community by supplying it with well-trained and well-educated employees and future managers and leaders. This could create an environment wherein these executives may enroll enough employees in the Dowling MBA program to ensure the future success of the program. Having specializations in the program could also create an environment wherein Dowling College MBA graduates would be more readily accepted as employees by these executives. Without this acceptance, students may refuse to attend Dowling College and the MBA program could cease to exist. This must not be allowed to happen.

Dowling College academics owe it to the various constituencies - students, the business community and society - to maintain and improve the MBA program. Standards within the program must not be lowered; in fact, the standards should be raised so that students continue to be prepared for leadership roles in the business world.

This study provided information to make recommendations so that the quality spiral of the program is upward, not downward. The program must become more effective so that the reputation of Dowling College is maintained. If the degree loses its luster, many would suffer as many employers would no longer see value in paying higher salaries based upon an individual's having attained the MBA degree (Newman, 1986:30).

The results of this study can have far reaching implications and consequences if the recommendations are accepted and implemented. Further study may be desired and/or necessary before some of the recommendations are implemented.

Recommendations

There were a number of recommendations made to the faculty and the Vice President of Academic Affairs as a result of this study. Some have already been acted upon and some are being studied further to determine the advisability of making changes. The recommendations made in this study, if implemented, would be the beginning of a major overhaul of the MBA curriculum.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Develop specializations in the program so that degrees in the following disciplines - Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Finance and Marketing would be offered.

2. The following courses should be added to the curriculum: Business Communications, Ethics, Human Resource Management, Labor Relations, Decision Making - Problem Solving - Critical Thinking. Finance related courses and Computer Information Systems related courses should also be added.

3. The following courses should be eliminated from the curriculum: Small Business Management, Manufacturing, Business Law, Government and Business, and Operations Research.

4. Faculty should examine their teaching methods. Emphasis should be placed upon case studies, projects and/or papers to improve communications skills and to develop in students certain analytical skills.

5. Examine the feasibility of using more business executives as guest lecturers and/or adjunct professors.

6. Examine the feasibility of expanding and promoting the MBA internship program.

7. Examine the feasibility of offering courses off-campus, i.e. at various firm locations.

8. A further study should be undertaken in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

Victor P. Meskill, Ph.D.
President

February 5, 1987

Mr. , President

N.Y.

Dear Mr. :

Dowling College, in its continuing concern to meet the needs of the Long Island business community, is evaluating its MBA program to assure that the program is in fact responsive to the needs of the community.

As a part of that process, I am asking you and other corporate leaders to lend a Dowling College a few minutes of your expertise. Would you please do me the service of either yourself completing or having one of your staff complete the enclosed questionnaire. Completion should require no more than ten minutes.

I appreciate your making time to do so and assure you that the responses will be carefully considered as we proceed with our deliberations as to how to make Dowling's MBA program an even more valuable asset to the Long Island community.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Victor P. Meskill
President

DOWLING COLLEGE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY IS TO ASSESS THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR M.B.A. PROGRAMS AS PERCEIVED BY BUSINESS EXECUTIVES ON LONG ISLAND.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SURVEY AND RETURN THE SCAN FORM WITH THIS COVER SHEET TO DOWLING COLLEGE IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE. YOUR COOPERATION IN THIS ENDEAVOR WILL GREATLY ASSIST DOWLING COLLEGE IN ITS EFFORTS TO EVALUATE AND THEN IMPROVE ITS MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM. OUR DESIRE IS TO MAKE THIS A PROGRAM OF EXCELLENCE THAT WILL PROVIDE THE FINEST EDUCATION TO THE STUDENTS AND TO PROVIDE WELL TRAINED FUTURE LEADERS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON LONG ISLAND.

THIS COVER SHEET WILL BE USED FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WHO HAS AND WHO HAS NOT RESPONDED.

PLEASE LIST YOUR NAME, POSITION, COMPANY NAME, ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER.

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING ON THESE PAGES. IF MORE SPACE IS REQUIRED, PLEASE WRITE ON THE BACK OR ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES.

WHAT ARE YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF THE STRONG POINTS OF GRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHAT ARE YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEFICIENCIES OF GRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHAT AREA OR CONCENTRATION DO YOU CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT TO AN MBS'S CAREER? PLEASE RANK IN IMPORTANCE FROM ONE TO FIVE.

_____ MANAGEMENT _____ MARKETING _____ FINANCE
_____ ACCOUNTING _____ COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS
_____ OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)_____

WHICH COURSES (OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED ON THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT) DO YOU THINK ARE MOST HELPFUL IN THE TRAINING OF AN MBA STUDENT AS FAR AS YOUR FIRM IS CONCERNED. PLEASE LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____

IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECOMMEND AN MBA COURSE OR COURSES (OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED ON THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT), WHICH WOULD YOU RECOMMEND? PLEASE LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE.

1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____

PLEASE USE THIS SPACE TO MAKE ANY COMMENTS YOU MAY FEEL ARE RELEVANT AND WOULD BE HELPFUL TO DOWLING COLLEGE. IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS REQUIRED, PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THESE PAGES.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING YOUR VALUABLE TIME TO RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY. YOUR RESPONSES AND THOSE OF OTHER BUSINESS EXECUTIVES WILL ASSIST DOWLING COLLEGE IN ASSESSING ITS MBA PROGRAM AND IN UPDATING IT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE LONG ISLAND BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE.

CHECK HERE IF YOU WOULD LIKE THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY SENT TO YOU.

YES _____ NO _____

MBA BUSINESS SURVEY

****

USING THE DATA COLLECTION FORM (SCAN FORM) PROVIDED AND A #2 PENCIL, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

Q.1 DOES YOUR FIRM REQUIRE ANY OF ITS EXECUTIVES OR EMPLOYEES TO HOLD AN M.B.A. DEGREE?

A. YES B. NO

Q.2 IF YES, MUST THIS DEGREE BE ACQUIRED BEFORE HIRING OR CAN IT BE ACQUIRED WHILE ON THE JOB?

A. BEFORE HIRING B. WHILE ON THE JOB

Q.3 IF THE M.B.A. DEGREE CAN BE ACQUIRED WHILE ON THE JOB DOES YOUR FIRM HAVE A TUITION REIMBURSMENT POLICY?

A. YES B. NO

Q.4 IF YOU HAVE HIRED M.B.A.s IN THE PAST, DO YOU CONSIDER THEIR EDUCATION TO HAVE BEEN ADEQUATE BASED UPON THE DEMANDS OF THE POSITION IN YOUR FIRM?

A. YES B. NO

WOULD YOUR FIRM AGREE TO HAVING COURSES TAUGHT AT THE FIRM'S SITE BY A DOWLING COLLEGE PROFESSOR

Q.5 DURING WORK HOURS? A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDED

Q.6 AFTER WORK HOURS? A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDED

Q.7 WOULD YOUR FIRM CONSIDER ENROLLING EMPLOYEES AND/OR EXECUTIVES AT DOWLING TO TAKE PARTICULAR COURSES?

A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDED

Q.8 WOULD YOUR FIRM CONSIDER ENROLLING MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES IN A DOWLING COLLEGE EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAM?

A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDED

Q.9 WOULD YOUR FIRM CONSIDER HAVING ANY OF ITS EXECUTIVES GUEST LECTURE AT DOWLING COLLEGE?

A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDED

Q.10 WOULD YOUR FIRM CONSIDER HAVING ANY OF ITS EXECUTIVES TEACH AS ADJUNCT PROFESSORS IN THEIR AREAS OF EXPERTISE?

A. YES B. NO C. UNDECIDE

IN ADDITION TO MANAGEMENT, SHOULD DOWLING OFFER A MAJOR OR CONCENTRATION IN THE MBA PROGRAM IN

Q.11 ACCOUNTING? A. YES B. NO C. NO OPINION

Q.12 COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS? A. YES B. NO C. NO OPINION

Q.13 FINANCE? A. YES B. NO C. NO OPINION

Q.14 MARKETING? A. YES B. NO C. NO OPINION

Q.15 AERONAUTICS? A. YES B. NO C. NO OPINION

USING THE FOLLOWING SCALE, INDICATE THE LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING MBA COURSES TO STUDENTS' OR ALUMNI'S CAREERS.

A. VERY IMPORTANT B. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
C. NOT VERY IMPORTANT D. UNIMPORTANT E. NO OPINION

Q.16 MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Q.17 PERSONNEL & INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Q.18 MANAGEMENT THEORY

Q.19 ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Q.20 SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Q.21 MANUFACTURING

Q.22 INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

Q.23 BUSINESS LAW

Q.24 FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANALYSIS

Q.25 MARKETING RESEARCH

Q.26 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Q.27 BUSINESS FORECASTING

USING THE FOLLOWING SCALE, INDICATE THE LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING MBA COURSES TO STUDENTS' AND ALUMNI'S CAREERS.

A. VERY IMPORTANT B. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
C. NOT VERY IMPORTANT D. UNIMPORTANT E. NO OPINION

Q.28 GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS

Q.29 OPERATIONS RESEARCH

Q.30 MANAGERIAL ECONOMICS

Q.31 MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTING

Q.32 MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Q.33 COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Q.34 WOULD YOU CONSIDER OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR DOWLING COLLEGE M.B.A. STUDENTS?

YES_____ NO_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION FORM